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Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001200080010-5

NSC BRIEFING

24 August 1960

LAOS

- I. The Souvanna Phouma-Kong Le group and the countercoup forces led by General Phoumi reached a tentative agreement on 23 August which could lead to political settlement of crisis set off by 9 August coup.
- II. According to Souvanna's version (largely corroborated by Phoumi's version), the agreement provides:
- A. General Ouane is to reorganize command structure of Vientiane forces and establish defense of town against Pathet Lao. (This includes bringing back Col. Sourith to assume command of paratroopers.)
  - B. Advance elements of Phoumi's forces will remain in Paksane--about 100 miles from Vientiane--pending notification from Ouane that Vientiane's defenses are secured.
  - C. Arms distributed to villagers in Vientiane area by Kong Le are to be recovered.
  - D. Following military arrangements, Souvanna, Phoumi, and the whole assembly will go to Luang Prabang (unless king wants to come to Vientiane) to work out a political settlement, probably a government of national union.
- 25X6 [REDACTED]
- III. Souvanna also claims Phoumi has agreed to his suggestion that the Communist Pathet Lao be offered reintegration into the national community, but not be invited into government.
- A. If Pathets refuse to lay down their arms under this formula, then onus for civil war will be on them.

DOCUMENT NO. 28  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. 11  
X DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEW DATE/DATE:  
AUTH. BY: 2  
DATE: 7/27/88 REVIEWER: 372044

Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79R00890A001200080010-5

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- IV. Implementation of the agreement may prove much more difficult than the parties to it appear to believe, and there many points on which negotiations could break down.
- A. Although Souvanna says Kong Le has agreed to above formula and even talked to Phoumi on telephone, it remains to be seen whether Kong has actually been convinced he can safely relax his grip on Vientiane without jeopardy to his personal safety or career.
1. Kong apparently made common purpose with Pathet Lao in Vientiane area to bolster capital's defenses and further his aims of ending civil war in Laos and adoption of strictly neutral policy.
- B. Recovery of arms distributed to civilians and Pathet Lao will almost certainly prove difficult, possibly impossible.
- C. DIFFERENCES ALREADY REPORTED ON TROOP PAY PROBLEM.
- V. Prior to above-reported agreement, Prince Souphannouvong, leader of the pro-Communist Neo Lao Hak Sat party, appealed over clandestine Pathet Lao radio for all Laotians to support the regime of his half-brother, Souvanna Phouma.
- A. This first public statement by Souphannouvong since escape from Vientiane jail last May.
- B. May mean Pathets will support compromise government only if headed by Souvanna Phouma or some other leftist or neutralist leader who sees Pathets as merely fellow-Lao.

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